

University of Northern Iowa

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# Geography Graduate Student Handbook

2024-2025



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## Revisions

<u>DATE</u>	<u>AUTHOR</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION</u>
Oct. 2018	J. Dietrich	Initial Release
Mar. 2019	J. Dietrich	Added ethics, added breath req., edits to thesis/proposal defenses
May 2024	B. Liang	Updated links and curriculum requirements/policies

### Possible Future Additions

- 1) Video conference proposal/thesis defense guidelines
- 2) External Committee members
  - a. From outside the department, outside the university
- 3) Student enrolled for both graduate and undergraduate credit in the same term
- 4) Advisee & Advisor Agreement Form
- 5) Use of AI in Graduate Student Research

## Introduction

This handbook provides a statement of requirements for graduate degrees in the Department of Geography, as well as explanations, advice and other information to help the student plan a rewarding graduate program.

Please be aware that the UNI College of Graduate, Research, and Online Education – Division of Graduate Studies (referred to Division of Graduate Studies – thereafter) has additional requirements and forms that must be completed at various stages in the graduate program. The Division of Graduate Studies requirements are not addressed in this Geography Graduate Handbook but are provided at the Division of Graduate Studies web page.

Each graduate student follows an individualized program designed to help him or her develop competence in a field of specialization and familiarity with the scope of geography as a discipline. The advising committee works with the student to determine each student's specific program. While there are a number of fixed requirements, there are also many decisions to be made about each individualized program. These individual program decisions are initiated by the student, who should first explore fields of interest and then consult geography faculty (main academic advisor, other committee members and/or the Graduate Coordinator) for further insights and guidance.

Working with graduate students is one of the most rewarding parts of a faculty member's job, so faculty are usually willing and thoughtful contributors to planning students' programs (within the limits of the time they have available). The ultimate responsibility lies with the student, however, to ensure that the requirements and academic standards of the department and the Division of Graduate Studies are met.

The student should start to plan their program by reading the requirements, and other information relevant to the intended degree, contained in this handbook, and meeting with the Graduate Coordinator to plan the first semester's courses and to ask questions about any requirements that are unclear. The student should consult with other faculty as needed about courses during the first year.

## Definitions, Roles, and Responsibilities

### Director of Graduate Studies (Graduate Coordinator):

- Acts as chair of the Graduate Studies Committee.
- Responsible for the day-to-day administrative aspects of the graduate program, including, but not limited to, serving as the first point of contact for internal and external requests for information from current and potential graduate students, Geography faculty, and other on-campus entities, and coordinating necessary communication.
- Makes graduate funding decisions (such as the ranking of applicants, the assignment of students to supervisors, and overall budget management) in coordination with the Graduate Studies Committee, and in communication with other faculty.
- Coordinates, in consultation with other faculty, each incoming student's initial advising, including the evaluation of transcripts to assess students' Geography backgrounds and recommended appropriate curriculum.
- Provides general advice on degree requirements throughout the program, monitors the progress of all graduate students, and certifies that departmental and university requirements are met.
- Approves, or denies, any special requests or waivers to requirements, and serves as the Geography Department representative on Graduate School forms requiring the Graduate Coordinator's signature.
- Coordinates graduate program recruitment efforts at the local, regional, national, and international levels.
- Works with Departmental Secretary to ensure timely completion of paperwork involving the graduate program, including acceptance/rejection letters, offer letters, offer letter revisions, and personnel action forms.
- Communicates with the Department Head and the rest of Geography faculty regarding, for each student, the status of applications, admissions decisions, funding decisions, funding sources, and assistantship roles and supervisors.
- Sets guidelines in consultation with the Graduate Studies Committee and other faculty, for timely completion of student proposals and presentations.
- Coordinates the development and maintenance of the department's Graduate Handbook, with information on the program's policies and procedures.

### Graduate Studies Committee:

- Collaborates with the Graduate Coordinator to manage the graduate admissions process and jointly makes final admissions decisions.
- Writes and enforces policies related to graduate student progress, including working with the Graduate Coordinator to maintain the Graduate Handbook
- Works with the Graduate Coordinator to jointly make assistantship assignment decisions.
- Assigns office space for graduate students
- Nominates students for campus-wide and departmental graduate student awards.
- Additional duties as assigned by the Graduate Coordinator or Department Head

**Regular Graduate Faculty:**

- Regular members of the Graduate Faculty, as defined by Article 1 of the UNI Graduate Faculty Constitution:
  - Tenured and tenure-track faculty at the assistant professor level or above with the appropriate terminal degree that have been nominated and approved by the Graduate Dean
- These faculty members are eligible to serve as both chair and committee members on thesis committees

**Associate Graduate Faculty:**

- Members of the department that are in roles of lecturer, instructor, or adjunct faculty. As well as visiting professors, distinguished national or international scholars or researchers, or external practitioners with specialized knowledge.
  - These faculty members should be nominated by the Department Head and approved as an Associate member of the Graduate Faculty by the Graduate Dean
- These faculty members are only eligible to serve as committee members on thesis committees

**Major Advisor (Thesis Committee Chair):**

- The faculty member appointed by a graduate student to be the student's primary advisor in selecting courses and in the preparation of the master's thesis.

**Thesis Committee:**

- The faculty members appointed by a graduate student in consultation with their major advisor who serve as secondary advisors in the preparation of the master's thesis.

**Department Head**

- Approves the final decisions about assistantship and scholarship awards based on the recommendation of and in consultation with the Graduate Coordinator, Graduate Studies Committee, and the Faculty.
- Oversees course planning and, in consultation with the faculty, works with the Graduate Coordinator to make decisions about the appointment of graduate students to teach courses.

**Graduate Assistantship Supervisor**

- The faculty member that is assigned to oversee a student's assistantship assignment.

**Department Administrative Assistant / Office Manager**

- Handles appointment paperwork and payroll.
  - Working with the graduate coordinator and Division of Graduate Studies on acceptance/rejection letters, offer letters, offer letter revisions, and personnel action forms.
- Has general responsibility for all functions of the department office, including policies concerning use of central office facilities.



## Academic and Professional Ethics

Geography graduate students are expected to adhere to all UNI policies concerning students and their conduct on and off campus.

- <https://policies.uni.edu/chapter-3-student-policies>

The Geography department also has a strong commitment to professional ethics as outlined by our professional organizations. The department subscribes to and abides by professional ethics statements from our two overarching professional organizations:

- American Association of Geographers
  - <https://www.aag.org/statement-of-professional-ethics/>
- American Geophysical Union
  - <https://ethics.agu.org/>

Violations of UNI policies will be handled as outlined in the relevant polities.

Violations of professional ethics often also constitute violations of UNI academic ethics and will be handled in a way consistent with UNI policies.

Violations may also fall under rules established for Geography-specific probation and suspension, outlined on page 20 and in the University's Programmatic Probation and Dismissal Policy and Procedures outlined in the 2024-25 Academic Catalog (<https://catalog.uni.edu/generalinformation/graduateinformation/>).

# General Program Information

## Admissions

Students interested in applying for the MA program in Geography are encouraged to visit the following websites for application and admissions

- UNI Graduate Admissions
  - <https://grad.uni.edu/graduate-admissions>
- the 2024-25 Academic Catalog
  - (<https://catalog.uni.edu/generalinformation/graduateinformation/>)

## *Departmental requirements*

<https://admissions.uni.edu/international/geography-ma>

The application package for prospective students will include:

- Overall undergraduate GPA of at least 2.75
  - transcripts of both undergraduate and graduate coursework are required
- A two-page essay outlining interests in Geography, reasons for application to the MA program at the University of Northern Iowa, and future career goals. The Department encourages applicants to identify areas of specialization and name specific faculty member(s) they desire to work at UNI. Students are also encouraged to contact those faculty member(s) they have identified and introduce themselves.
- at least two letters of recommendation
- Assistantship Applications (optional)
  - <https://grad.uni.edu/funding/application-graduate-assistantship>
- Scholarship Applications (optional)
  - <https://grad.uni.edu/funding/tuition-scholarship-application>
- International Students:
  - TOEFL score of 79, IELTS score of 6.5, or Duolingo score of 105 is required for unconditional admission
  - International students also had have additional requirements and separate deadlines
    - <https://admissions.uni.edu/international/geography-ma>

The Department of Geography MA curriculum is designed for graduate students to be admitted in the Fall semester. For full consideration (admissions and funding) all application materials must be received by the Fall admission deadline of February 1. Applications received after Feb. 1 are not guaranteed to given full consideration.

- On a very limited basis, the graduate committee may consider students for Spring admission. Please contact the graduate coordinator to discuss Spring admission. All

application materials are required by November 1, consideration for funding will only be on an as available basis.

### *Admissions decisions*

The Graduate Studies Committee will review application materials and make an initial list of the most qualified candidates, followed by a review of applications by the entire faculty. Admission candidates will be ranked and admission decisions will be referred to the UNI Office of Admissions.

### **Assistantships / Scholarships**

Assistantships and tuition scholarships are awarded to incoming and continuing graduate students on a competitive basis, contingent on the availability of funds.

Students/faculty are referred to the 2024-25 Academic Catalog for complete definitions, policies, and procedures.

- <https://catalog.uni.edu/generalinformation/graduateinformation/>

### *Definitions*

**Graduate Assistantship:** A Graduate Assistantship is an employment position on campus that is awarded full-time (20 hours per week) or half-time (10 hours per week). It enhances the student's graduate education by exposing them to the professional activities and concerns of their discipline and gives them opportunities to work closely with faculty and other university professionals.

**Graduate Tuition Scholarship:** Graduate Tuition Scholarships are awarded as a half or as a full scholarship at the in-state tuition rate. It does not cover fees. No service or work is done in exchange for a Graduate Tuition Scholarship. Students receiving this award will see their scholarship posted to their u-bill by the first day of the semester. A Graduate Tuition Scholarship does not qualify a student for the resident tuition rate. Students are responsible for the amount of their tuition and fees that the scholarship does not cover.

**Graduate Teaching Assistants:** Graduate students given primary responsibility for the instruction of undergraduate courses. The department will assign graduate assistants the responsibility of teaching course/discussion as assistants working with students under the guidance of a professor.

**Graduate Research Assistants:** Research Assistants are selected for excellence in scholarship and promise as researchers. They do research as a portion of their training under the direct supervision of regular faculty members or support the research initiatives of the institution.

**Graduate Service Assistants:** Graduate Service Assistants assist in a service unit whose mission is closely related to the student’s area of academic study and interest. They are responsible to a professional member of the service unit who supervises and trains the student in the service role.

**Graduate Assistant (or GA):** is used to refer to all of the above positions.

**GA Supervisor:** The faculty member that is assigned to oversee a student’s assistantship

### Applications

Students are required to submit applications for 1) assistantship and 2) scholarship every year they wish to be funded by assistantships and/or scholarships.

- <https://grad.uni.edu/funding>
- Assistantship and/or scholarship applications are to be sent to the Department Administrative Assistant by February 1st for consideration for the next academic year

### Eligibility

The minimum eligibility requirements for assistantships and/or scholarships, students are:

1. Students must possess a bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited institution.
2. Students must be admitted to graduate study at the University of Northern Iowa on a degree-track basis.
3. Students must maintain a GPA of at least 3.0 (Newly admitted students must have an undergraduate GPA of at least 2.75)
4. Student must be enrolled in at least 9 qualifying on-campus graduate-level credit hours for each semester during the award.
5. **Maximum support:** MA students are allowed a maximum of four (4) semesters of financial support per degree.

### Types of funding

Students may be funded (assistantships/scholarships) from a variety of sources including funds from:

- Division of Graduate Studies, College of Social and Behavioral Sciences, Department of Geography
- Individual Grants acquired by faculty
- Other departments or service units on campus

### Funding decisions

Graduate Assistantships are awarded based on the recommendations of the department. After the application deadline, the Graduate Studies Committee will review all of the Graduate

Assistantship applications received. The department must consider all qualified students; however, continuing students who have performed well should have priority for continued support.

### Enrollment requirements

Students who have been offered an assistantship/scholarship **MUST** be enrolled in at least 9 qualifying on-campus graduate-level credit hours per semester **BEFORE** any award can be processed. Students who fail to enroll in 9 qualifying on-campus graduate-level credit hours per semester will forfeit any awards.

- Students are also required to have an undergraduate GPA of at least 2.75 or a graduate GPA of 3.0 for the last 60 academic credits, a declared program, and official undergraduate transcripts on file

### Assistantship Assignments

GA assignments are made by the Graduate Coordinator in coordination with the Graduate Studies Committee based on departmental needs and student skill sets. Assignments are made on a semester-basis and students are encouraged to communicate with the Graduate Coordinator about their interest in any particular assignment.

Teaching assistantship assignments are made for specific courses, students should only be extending effort toward their assigned courses. Research assistants will be assigned to a professor for a specific project and students should only be extending effort toward their assigned project.

### *For faculty*

- Teaching assistants can be requested by individual instructors on as needed basis
  - Courses with standing TA positions: Planet Earth Laboratory, Global Geography, GIS I/II/Apps, Cartography Design, Remote Sensing Env/Sat Image Proc., GPS, Env Data Analysis, UAS I/II
- Research Assistants may be requested by individual faculty members for specific research projects (either semester or year-long)
  - To assist in evaluating the research need by the graduate coordinator, research assistant requests must be accompanied by a written description of what specific RA duties the students will be performing during their appointment. These requirements will be communicated to the student(s) and used in evaluating student performance.
- Faculty external funding:

- Faculty who provide support for an assistantship (full or partial) through an external grant or special-purpose internal funding will be allocated RAs in accordance with grant or special purpose terms.
- Faculty will still be required to submit a written description of the specific RA duties the students will be performing during their appointment
- Faculty are reminded that Assistantships best serve graduate students and the university when they are used as an integral part of graduate education. They should under no circumstances detract from a student's graduate education nor distract him or her from its pursuit. Assistantships cannot be justified merely as a source of inexpensive labor or even merely as financial support for students. Graduate Assistant assignments should enhance students' graduate education by exposing them to the professional activities and concerns of their discipline, involving them in university activities related to their academic and professional interests, and giving them opportunities to work closely with faculty

### Salary

Current salary information is listed on the Geography website. Graduate Assistants with at least a half-time appointment for an entire semester receive tuition billed at the resident rate.

### Absences

Temporary absences must be communicated and approved by the student's GA supervisor. Other types of absences and leave are to be handled in accordance with the current revision of the Graduate Assistant Handbook available from the Division of Graduate Studies

(<https://grad.uni.edu/current-students>).

### Assistantship Time Management

Students and faculty should use the following guidelines for weekly time allocation. Students are responsible for creating a weekly schedule (in consultation with their assistantship supervisor or the graduate coordinator) that incorporates the time below with the student's course schedule and research schedule.

#### **Planet Earth Laboratory (20 hour assignment)**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Time Allowance</b>
Lecture Attendance	3 hours
Office Hours	3 hours
Lab Instruction	2 hours
Lab Grading	5 hours
Lecture Grading	3 hours
Lab Prep, Blackboard maintenance, student E-mail responses	4 hours

**Global Geography (20 hour assignment)**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Time Allowance</b>
Lecture Attendance	3 hours
Office Hours	3 hours
Lecture Grading	5 hours
Blackboard maintenance, student E-mail responses	4 hours

**GIScience Courses (10 hours per course)**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Time Allowance</b>
Lecture Attendance	3 hours
Office Hours	3 hours
Lab and/or Lecture Grading	3 hours
Lab Prep, Blackboard maintenance, student E-mail responses, Lecture	1 hours

**Research Assistantships (10 or 20 hour assignments)**

Students are encouraged to work with their research assistantship supervisor to develop a weekly work schedule.

*Assistantship Evaluations*

*To be added...*

## Master's Degree Requirements

The MA program in Geography is available on the thesis (research) track and non-thesis (professional) track. Students should work closely with their advisor and the Graduate Coordinator) to outline their degree plan.

### Breadth Requirements

In order to ensure that all geography graduate students have a base level of geographic literacy, incoming students will be required to have taken the equivalent course work to:

- 1) Peoples Cultures and Env or Global Geography
- 2) Planet Earth
- 3) GIS I

If an incoming student does not have previous coursework to fulfill these requirements, they will be required to audit the appropriate course(s) in their first year.

- GIS I may be taken for graduate credit as GEOG 6286 – Studies in GIS

### Degree Options

#### *Thesis (research) track*

The Thesis track requires a minimum of 33 credit hours of coursework, including 6 hours GEOG 6299 for the completion of an original research project, including a written and orally defended thesis.

GEOG 6010	Geography Graduate Research Methods	3
GEOG 6550	Seminar (History of Geographic Thought)	3
GEOG 6299	Research (1,2, or 3 credits - max 6 credits)	6
Electives	<i>At least 12 of the 21 hours must be in Geography*</i>	21
TOTAL		33

Thesis-track additional requirements:

- Students must successfully present a written and oral thesis proposal prior to registration in GEOG 6299
- Only graduate courses (course number 5000 or above) will apply to a graduate degree, even if the undergraduate course number (4999 or less) is listed. No exceptions will be made.
- A minimum of 17 hours of 6000-level course work is required.

\*At least 12 of the 21 hours must be in geography; at least 3 of the 18 hours must be at the 6000-level; cannot include GEOG 6598; additional hours of GEOG 6299 cannot count toward the minimum 21 elective hours.



*Non-Thesis (professional) track*

The Non-thesis track requires a minimum of 30 credit hours of coursework, including 3 hours GEOG 6598 for the completion of research project of a more limited scope than a thesis project. Students are required write a Research Paper (NTRP)

GEOG 4570/5570	Sustainability and Geographic Leadership	3
GEOG 5150	Regional Geography: (Variable Topic)	3
GEOG 5270	Science of Scenery	3
GEOG 6010	Geography Research Methods	3
GEOG 6550	Seminar (History of Geographic Thought)	3
GEOG 6598	Directed Research Project	3
Electives	<i>At least 3 of the 12 hours must be in Geography<sup>‡</sup> and 3 hours must be a skills elective</i>	12
TOTAL		30

Non-Thesis track Additional requirements:

- Students must successfully present a written and oral research proposal prior to registration in GEOG 6598
- Only graduate courses (course number 5000 or above) will apply to a graduate degree, even if the undergraduate course number (4999 or less) is listed. No exceptions will be made.
- A minimum of 17 hours of 6000-level course work is required.

‡ At least 3 hours must be a content elective and 3 hours must be a skills elective. Students may take an additional 3 hours of GEOG 6598 as an elective with approval of the Graduate Coordinator.

## Electives

All electives must be added to a student’s degree plan via the “Student Request” process (see below). All electives should be chosen in coordination with a student’s advisor and are subject to approval by the Graduate Director and the Division of Graduate Studies.

## Suggested Timeline for completion

For the Thesis track:

Fall Year 1		Spring Year 1	
GEOG 6550: Hist Geo Sem.	3	GEOG 6010: Research Methods	3
Elective	3	Elective	3
Elective	3	Elective	3
<b>Summer Year 1: Research Data Collection</b>			
Fall Year 2		Spring Year 2	
Elective	3	Elective	3
GEOG 6299: Research	2	GEOG 6299: Research	4
Elective / Readings	3	Readings	1

For the Non-thesis track:

Fall Year 1		Spring Year 1	
GEOG 6550: Hist Geo Sem.	3	GEOG 6010: Research Methods	3
Elective	3	GEOG 5570: Geo Leadership	3
Elective	3	Elective	3
<b>Summer Year 1: Research Data Collection</b>			
Fall Year 2		Spring Year 2	
GEOG 5270: Sci Scenery	3	GEOG 5150: Reg Geo	3
Elective	3	Elective / Readings	1-3
Elective / Readings	2-3	GEOG 6598: Directed Research	3

## Advising

The student must appoint a major advisor (thesis committee chair). The student identifies an appropriate faculty member to serve as the major advisor. Ideally the student will identify a faculty member whose teaching and research specializations are closest to the student's intended

research focus. The student must consult with their potential advisor and faculty members have the option of declining to serve if they feel they cannot adequately advise the student on the intended thesis topic, or if their schedule does not allow them to serve. When the student and faculty member agree on an advisor/advisee relationship, the student must complete an internal “Advisor Declaration Form” available from the graduate coordinator who will refer the change to the Registrar’s office.

For some students with a very well-defined set of research interests, the choice of thesis advisor may be clear from the outset of their program. However, for some master’s students this may be less clear given connections to the research specializations of more than one faculty member. For those in the latter situation, we encourage the student to use fall semester to meet and interact with various faculty before making a decision about who the student would like to have serve as their major advisor. It is important to start working on this process immediately, by taking courses with potential advisors and/or meeting with them to talk about the student’s research interests and their approach to advising. We also organize fall term meetings between the new student group and faculty members, to facilitate this process.

Because of the relatively short timeline for completing a master’s degree, master’s students need to declare the major advisor of their committee by the end of first semester of their first year. If the student feels unable to finalize that decision by that time, the student must schedule a meeting with the Graduate Coordinator to discuss advising options and plans. There may be legitimate reasons why the student cannot designate an advisor by the end of first semester of their first year, but these need to be discussed with the Graduate Coordinator. If necessary, students can change advisors by submitting a revised Advisor Declaration Form.

## Satisfactory Progress

As part of funding decisions, the faculty expects that students make satisfactory progress toward their degree. For the MA degree this includes the following metrics:

- By the end of the first year:
  - Core course requirement completed (GEOG 6550 and 6010)
  - At least two courses in program of study completed
  - Thesis proposal completed and thesis committee appointed OR research proposal completed and graduate advisor(s) appointed
- By the end of the second year:
  - Remaining core course and electives completed
  - Complete the thesis (and six credits of GEOG 6299) or the research paper (and three credits of GEOG 6598), or make substantial progress on analysis and begin writing the thesis or the research paper

## Probation and Suspension

### GPA Requirements

Graduate students are held to high standards and are expected to maintain a grade point average of at least 3.0 throughout their degree. Students with GPA below 3.0 lose their eligibility for graduate scholarship and assistantship.

Per Division of Graduate Studies policy, if a student falls below a 3.0 GPA they will be placed on Probation. They will have 8 credit hours (one semester) to raise their GPA to 3.0. If the GPA remains below 3.0, the student will be suspended from the University for a minimum of one semester. After the suspension period, an application for readmission to a graduate degree program should be completed through the Graduate College. A student reinstated after suspension who fails to attain a GPA of 3.00 with the first 8 credits after reinstatement will be terminated from the graduate program.

### Geography-specific probation and suspension

In accordance with the University's Programmatic Probation and Dismissal Policy and Procedures in the 2024-25 Academic Catalog (<https://catalog.uni.edu/generalinformation/graduateinformation/>), the department reserves the right to place a student on probation or withdraw a student from the program for non-academic reasons. These reasons include, but are not limited to: 1) deficiencies in the student's ability to demonstrate professional conduct; or 2) behavior that is inconsistent with the UNI or professional ethics standards (outlined on page 9: Academic and Professional Ethics).

It is imperative that graduate students demonstrate the integrity and emotional maturity and stability necessary to form and maintain professional relationships with other students, faculty, clients, or external agencies/organizations. Students who do not demonstrate the ability to form such relationships will be considered deficient in their professional conduct and ability, even if their academic record is satisfactory. In this case, students who fail to demonstrate professional conduct and/or ability will be placed under programmatic probation. If a student fails to meet the goals/deadlines outlined as part of their probation, the student will be withdrawn from the program and not be allowed to complete the M.A. degree program.

If a faculty member or another graduate student should have concerns about a student's nonacademic conduct or continued matriculation in the program, the faculty member or student should notify the Graduate Coordinator. The Graduate Coordinator will notify the student in writing about the concerns raised about him/her and invite him/her to meet with the Graduate Coordinator to discuss the concerns. The student will be given 10 business days to respond to the notification and to meet with the Graduate Coordinator. If warranted by the situation, the Graduate Coordinator will attempt to work out remedial steps aimed at helping the student meet

expected levels of professional conduct. In some instances, the Graduate Coordinator may ask the Department Head to convene an ad hoc Graduate Retention Committee and appoint three tenured or tenure-track faculty members to serve on this committee, which is charged with reviewing students' nonacademic conduct and making recommendations to the Graduate Coordinator about students' continuation in the program. In such a case, the student will be notified in writing about the purpose of the meeting and invited to attend and to provide information. The committee may meet with the faculty member(s), student(s), and/or other professionals directly involved with the student's situation in its deliberations. As stated in the University's "Nonacademic Probation and Dismissal Policy Procedures," the student may request a review of the department's actions if he/she believes "there has been unfairness or some procedural irregularity concerning probation or dismissal." If a student is suspended or terminated on these grounds, there transcript will indicate programmatic suspension or dismissal.

### Filing Graduate Student Requests

A number of administrative tasks necessary for the completion of the MA degree must be initiated by the student through the online "Student Request" process in the MyUniverse My Page tab. BEFORE submitting a student request students should consult the Graduate Coordinator or the Department Administrative assistant. This will ensure that requests are given the correct code and the appropriate information/justification information is given.

- Unclear or incorrect student requests will be denied by the Graduate Coordinator or the Division of Graduate Studies

### Continuing registration

Graduate students who have completed all of their program coursework but have not completed all of their graduation requirements (e.g. thesis, directed research paper) must be continuously registered until the degree is completed.

Students reaching this stage will be required to register in the course GEOG 629C Continuous Registration and assessed a \$150 fee. It is the student's responsibility to contact the Department Administrative Assistant to ensure that they are registered for each major term (Fall and Spring). Continuous enrollment ensures that students and their advisors can access their university records, receive important emails from university offices, and that students can utilize the library and its services through graduation.

### Time limits

Time limits on the completion of degrees have been established to ensure that a student who earns a UNI graduate degree is current in the discipline at the time of graduation. The allotted time to a Master's degree is seven years from the earliest course applied to the degree. See the University Registrar's office/Academic Catalog for more information on expired time limits.

## Graduate Certificates

The Geography Department also offers graduate certificates (see Academic Catalog for current course requirements). Graduate students are encouraged to apply their electives toward any of these certificates, however this should only be done in consultation with their advisor and the priority should be on elective courses that help the student complete their thesis.

## Research Products

### Thesis

A thesis is designed to introduce students to the process of preparing a substantial piece of research on a geographical subject, allowing the student to develop significant expertise on that subject. Students also gain experience in preparing academic communications, both written and oral.

### *Committee requirements*

Students, in consultation with their advisor, are responsible for appointing a three-person thesis committee (one chair/advisor and two secondary members). The two secondary members must be regular members of the Graduate Faculty (at least one from Geography). Additional secondary members may be added if they are associate members of the Graduate Faculty. The committee should be set by the end of the first semester of their first year. Students are required to fill out the “Thesis Committee Approval Form” online via the Division of Graduate Studies website (<https://grad.uni.edu/current-students>).

Membership of the committee should be designed to include those faculty members whose teaching and research specializations are closest to the student’s intended research focus, and those faculty with expertise in the research skills appropriate for that research focus. Faculty members have the option of declining to serve if they feel they cannot adequately advise the student on the intended thesis topic, or if their schedule does not allow them to serve.

### *Proposal*

A thesis or research proposal must be approved by the thesis committee or the graduate advisor by the end of the student’s second semester. With permission of the thesis committee or the graduate advisor and the graduate coordinator this deadline may be extended.

The proposal should include the elements listed below under Sample Outline. It should be 10-20 pages, double-spaced, not including the bibliography. Students should work closely with their advisor to design the specific proposal format.

If it is necessary to change the scope of the project at a later date, the thesis committee will decide whether a new proposal is needed.

**Sample outline for master’s thesis proposal:**

1. Tentative thesis title, author, date of proposal
2. Introduction: A statement of the research problem, an overview of the relevant literature, statement the research questions and a discussion of why these questions are significant.
3. Literature review/Background: A thorough review of all of the literature needed to establish the justification for the study and the proposed methods.
4. Study area: What is your study area (if relevant) and why is it an appropriate study area?
5. Methodology: What do you plan to do? How will you go about collecting data/information and analyzing it, i.e. what is your research plan?
6. Funding: What are the costs of the project? What sources of funding are being or will be pursued?
7. Work plan and schedule: What are the steps involved in completing the project? How long will each step take you and when will it be accomplished? What is your anticipated completion date?
8. References cited

*Oral proposal presentation*

As part of the proposal approval process, students must present their proposal to the department once the proposal is informally approved by the thesis advisor.

**SCHEDULING:** The proposal presentation date should be agreed upon by the committee. The student should report the date to the Graduate Coordinator and the department administrative assistant. The student is responsible for submitting their written proposal to their committee members at least two (2) weeks prior to the agreed upon presentation date. Failure to submit the written proposal two-weeks before the presentation will result in a cancellation of the presentation and a rescheduling. Exceptions to the two-week rule require written approval from the thesis committee **and** the Graduate Coordinator. The presentation must be advertised at **least one (1) week in advance** by the department administrative assistant.

**Presentation Format:** The proposal presentation is administered by the advisor. Proposal presentations should be limited to 20 minutes and include a similar list of elements that are in the written proposal. After the oral presentation, the audience will have an opportunity to ask questions. At the conclusion of the audience questions, the committee and the student will go into a private question session so the student can answer more in depth questions. After the private question session, the committee enters into an executive session without the student. The possible outcomes for the executive session are, 1) Approved Proposal, 2) Approved with minor edits, 3) Major revisions, or 4) Failure

### *Thesis*

A written thesis approved by the thesis committee and completion of at least six credits of thesis (GEOG 6299). When submitted to the Graduate School, the thesis must conform to the UNI Thesis and Dissertation Manual (available from the Division of Graduate Studies).

### *Format*

The citation style for all geography theses should conform the guidelines the Chicago Manual of Style (any edition) and use the Author-Date format for citations. Regardless of the chosen format, the final thesis document must conform to the Division of Graduate Studies Thesis Formatting Guidelines.

Students, in close consultation with their advisor, may choose to construct their thesis using one of two possible formats:

- 1) Monograph-format – The “traditional” thesis format is a longer written work on a specialized subject.
- 2) A research article – A research article is a concise, “publishable” written work. Articles are written specifically for possible publication in a peer-reviewed journal. Students and their advisor will identify a possible outlet and the final output should meet the standards of the chosen journal.
  - a. Journal-style thesis should conform to the journal’s “guide to authors” for a “full-length” research article. Shorter “letters”-length articles are not allowed.

### *Defense*

As part of the requirements for graduation, an oral presentation of the master's thesis at a public lecture is required. This is commonly a presentation in the department, but other venues may be used if approved by the thesis adviser and the Graduate Coordinator.

The thesis defense requires students to explain their work and its significance in a fashion that is understandable to a general audience and requires students to synthesize and articulate what they have accomplished. This also familiarizes others in the department with the work of the student and their master's thesis.

**SCHEDULING:** The thesis defense date should be agreed upon by the committee. The student should report the defense date to the Graduate Coordinator and the department administrative assistant. The student is responsible for submitting their final draft of their thesis to their committee members at least two (2) weeks prior to the agreed upon presentation date. Students should coordinate with the office manager and the colloquium coordinator to schedule a time for the presentation. The presentation must be advertised **at least one (1) week in advance** by the office manager.



**FORMAT:** Defense presentations should be approximately 60 minutes (45-50 minutes plus questions). At the conclusion of the audience questions, the committee and the student will go into a private question session so the student can answer more in depth questions. After the private question session, the committee enters into an executive session without the student. The possible outcomes for the executive session are, 1) Approved Thesis, 2) Approved with minor edits, 3) Major revisions, or 4) Failure.

**REVISIONS:** Committee members may request minor or major changes to the written document. These changes should be made in consultation with the thesis advisor. Care should be taken to complete all changes requested before the document is given back to the committee member(s), as the thesis committee may also refuse to pass a document that does not meet their requirements after two additional rounds of revision (beyond the document as originally presented to the thesis committee members).

**SUMMER DEFENSES:** Students are discouraged from scheduling defenses after the last day of the Spring semester. If a summer defense needs to be scheduled, the student must get written approval for the presentation date from each member of the thesis committee **and** the Graduate Coordinator.

**DEFENSE LIMIT:** If a student does pass the oral portion of their defense, he/she may be given up to two more chances to successfully defend the project at the discretion of the thesis committee. However, no student will be allowed more than three chances. If a student does not pass the oral defense on the third try, he/she will not be allowed to graduate with the M.A. (i.e. student will be terminated from the program).

### *Deadlines*

For the most up to date deadlines for Summer, Fall, Spring graduation, see the Division of Graduate Studies Calendar:

- <https://guides.lib.uni.edu/grad-college-format>

If a student completes their thesis after the stated deadlines, their degree will be officially conferred the next semester.

## Non-thesis Research Paper (NTRP)

The Non-thesis Research Paper (NTRP) is a concise report of the student’s research project. The report has a more limited scope than a full thesis.

### *Advising*

A non-thesis student works closely with their advisor to develop their paper and the final paper must be approved by the advisor and the department head. No “committee” is needed for the non-thesis research paper.

### *Research Paper format*

The citation style for all research papers should conform to the guidelines for the Annals of the American Association of Geographers.

The specific format of the research paper will depend on the nature and scope of the project that was undertaken by the student. The research paper will often resemble a thesis in its organization, with less of a literature review and more emphasis on the outputs or products of the research project.

### *Presentation*

Upon completion of their research paper, students are required to give an informal public presentation (30 minutes). Students should coordinate with their advisor, the department administrative assistant, and the colloquium coordinator to schedule a time for the presentation. The presentation must be advertised at least one (1) week in advance by the department administrative assistant.

### *Timeline with deadlines*

There is no formal deadline for completion of the research paper and presentation. However, students should aim to complete both requirements two weeks before the graduation application deadline for whichever term they wish to graduate (see thesis deadlines below).

- Division of Graduate Studies Calendar: <https://guides.lib.uni.edu/grad-college-format>

# General Department Policies

## Office space / Computers

Office space and computers in the Grad Lab (ITTC 241) are assigned by the Graduate Coordinator. Students with Teaching Assistantships will be given priority, followed by research assistants. Other graduate students may be eligible for office space as space allows. Computers in ITTC 241 are provided by the Department and should be used only for “business” purposes (e.g., teaching and research). Computers cannot be moved/removed without the permission of the Graduate Coordinator and Informational Technologies (IT).

Computers in the GIS Lab (ITTC 224) are available to Graduate Students as part of GIS courses, but these computers are first-come-first-served for all students in GIS courses.

Graduate students should not use computers in GeoTree without written permission of the GeoTree director.

## Computer Software

Computers in the department contain a standard suite of software that has been developed in cooperation with the IT department. After consulting with the Graduate Coordinator, students can request additional software installations or software updates through the Service Hub (<https://servicehub.uni.edu>).

- In Service Hub, create a “New Incident” –
  - The subject should be – Geography Grad Software Install, ITTC 241
  - include the name of the software to be installed, a link to the software (if available online), your computer name (sticker on the side of your computer case)
- IT will contact the student and schedule an appropriate time to do the installation

## Keys and keycards

Keys to the Grad Lab (ITTC 241) can be requested from the department administrative assistant. Students teaching classes may be eligible for classroom keys, requests can be made to the Graduate Coordinator and the department administrative assistant.

Keys are officially issued by UNI Facilities Management. Lost or Stolen keys should be reported immediately to the Office Manager. Individuals leaving the university or transferring to another department must return their keys to Facilities Management. The individual will receive an electronic receipt indicating the keys that have been returned. If a student does not return keys, there is a charge for lost keys and transcripts or registration can be delayed until the keys are returned.

After hours building access is via key card access tied to a student's ID card. The department administrative assistant can process requests for after-hours access.

## Travel

Individuals traveling for in-state, out-of-state, and international University business (conferences, research, etc.) must receive approval from the department **prior** to incurring any expenses. Travel requests must be approved using the electronic ProTrav trip request form. ProTrav workflow will systematically route the trip for approval, but it is the end users' responsibility to ensure that proper approvals are received.

Upon returning from a trip all travel expenses must be itemized in ProTrav on a travel expense voucher (for out-of-pocket expenses).

## Research and travel funding

Funds for research and conference travel are available on an annual basis from a variety of sources including:

- The Intercollegiate Academics Fund
- The Division of Graduate Studies
- The College of Social and Behavioral Science
- The Department of Geography
- External grants

Students should consult with the Graduate Coordinator and/or the Graduate Advisor for potential funding sources at the beginning of the semester when the travel is planned to occur.

## Appendixes

**TA Job description (attached)**

**RA Job description (attached)**

**Other Job Descriptions (attached)**